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# THE KIT-KAT



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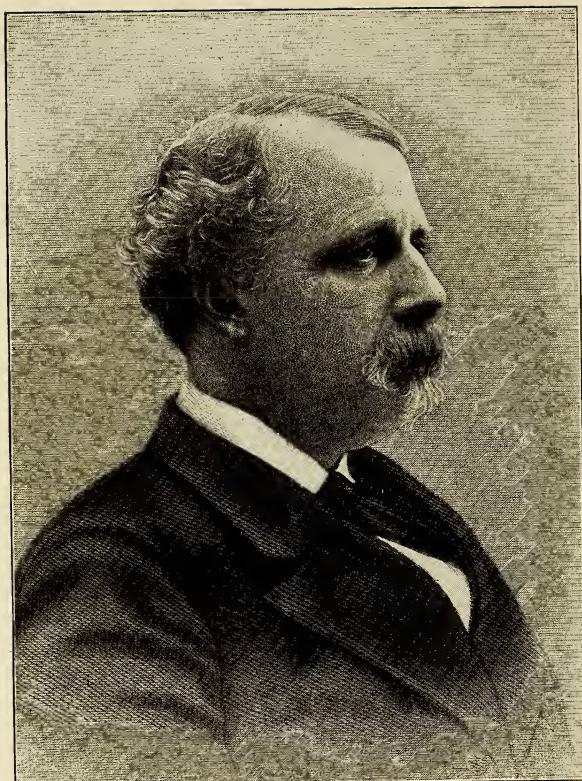
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MURAT HALSTEAD

Successively editor of the *Cincinnati Commercial*,  
*Cincinnati Commercial-Gazette* and *Brooklyn Standard-Union*. He was nominated by President Benjamin Harrison to be United States Minister to Germany, but the nomination was not confirmed.

See page 42-43  
their origin of  
original  
a speech  
Feb 12, 1888

## ABRAHAM LINCOLN

By MURAT HALSTEAD

**W**HEN Abraham Lincoln was a young man appealing to the people as a candidate for the Legislature, he said:

Upon the subjects of which I have treated I have spoken as I have thought. I may be wrong as to any or all of them; but holding it a sound decision, that it is better only sometimes to be right than at all times wrong, so soon as I discover my opinions to be erroneous, I shall be ready to renounce them.

An older man, with the greater part of life behind him, would have told, with concern but without confusion, the tale of error without wrong intention, and renunciation that meant advancement to higher ground for firmer footsteps in the straight way of the righteousness that exalts a people.

We may infer that if Mr. Lincoln had been an editor instead of a lawyer, if he had been of the press instead of President, and if for many years he had spent the long nights in writing as he thought on all subjects of current interest, often upon imperfect information, and there had appeared each morning a printed sheet upon which was unchangeably recorded his candid expressions of opinion, there would have been many mistakes acknowledged as to men and measures, many regrets confessed and judgments reversed, misgivings as to labors personal and public indulged. All of this in his own language, "with malice toward none and charity for all"; and that he would safely and reverently have invoked, as upon the act held to be the most important

of his life, "the considerate judgment of mankind and the gracious favor of Almighty God."

December, 1860, Mr. Lincoln, President-elect, wrote an editorial paragraph for the Springfield *Journal* as follows:

We have such frequent allusions to a supposed purpose on the part of Mr. Lincoln to call into his Cabinet two or three Southern gentlemen from the parties opposed to him politically, that we are prompted to ask a few questions.

*First:* Is it known that any such gentleman of character would accept a place in the Cabinet?

*Second:* If yea, on what terms does he surrender to Mr. Lincoln or Mr. Lincoln to him, all the political differences between them, or do they enter upon the administration in open opposition to each other?

Messrs. Hay and Nicolay, the private secretaries and historians of Lincoln, say of this that the authorship of the paragraph was not made public, but I happened to be of those who knew at the time that Lincoln had written the lines that were as characteristic as they were significant. Mr. Henry Villard, the distinguished railroad builder and financier, then the Springfield correspondent of the Cincinnati *Commercial*, sent me the "copy" of the paragraph in the handwriting of Mr. Lincoln.

I have no purpose of speaking exclusively or chiefly, or even by preference, of those things in which it was my fortune to be in agreement with Mr. Lincoln, and in which I strove to help him, for there is nothing that so fitly becomes a tribute to him, or is so precious to us all, as the truth of history. Of this it has been remarked that the truths of history are sacred, like those of religion, but it is better to say that the truths of history and religion are the same. The defense for untruth is only that as the winds blew and the water flowed and the light shone, it was believed to be truth.

I well remember Mr. Lincoln's editorial in the Springfield *Journal*—remember reading it repeatedly in the manuscript, which was plain as print, and in the *Journal*, with a growing sense of the deepening trouble in the air and a tremor in the earth we had thought solid ground—and the idea that perhaps it might be inspired by suggestions that I had penned, for I was of those who knew the absolute good faith of Mr. Lincoln's conservatism, and hoped that he might by some extraordinary, even excessive concession, make manifest to the Union men of the South, as it was to us of the North, the safety with which the country might repose upon his saving common sense of justice and respect for law; and that they might thus be strengthened to stay the hands of those whose footsteps were already upon the paths that led to war.

Then, as at the beginning of the war, and in every chapter of it to Appomattox, and indeed ever since, and never more than now, Republican statesmanship upon which the national life was suspended, and in which it is yet bound up, consisted in uniting the North and dividing the South. We did not all see then, but who can read history and not see in the amazing unity of the Northern uprising after the bombardment of Fort Sumter, that the genius of statesmanship was with the Kentuckian who was President of the United States, and not with the other son of that State who was the President of the Confederate States.

This statesmanship of Lincoln was not the expression of artificial accomplishments, but the inherent sagacity of honest manhood and the intuitive prescience of patriotism.

One of those slow to see in its full proportions the serious greatness of Lincoln was Salmon P. Chase,

whom I loved, admired, honored and followed. Impatient once upon a time with Lincoln's long waiting for the ripeness of public sentiment to warrant the execution of a policy that had been determined, Chase said with sorrowful concern: "It has come to this—according to Mr. Lincoln—that it is statesmanship to do nothing." It is so, too, but that is not what Chase then thought. After Lincoln was gone, the remark was made to the Chief Justice: "You differed greatly and often with Mr. Lincoln, did you not?" "Oh, yes," said Chase, "we differed with him and got out of patience with him, but"—and his voice took its deep tone of emphasis and emotion—"I do not know but he was wiser than all of us." And so he was.

Mr. Lincoln's paragraph in the Republican paper of his town, told that there was no peace—though all the compromisers might cry it in the streets—in the abandonment of principle. He walked serenely as his duty was declared to him, and his farewell address at Springfield told how profoundly he had been impressed by the responsibilities that rested upon him, while his inaugural address contains an appeal to the people to get understanding by listening to the better angels of their nature, that, in touching the highest motives with the simple dignity and austere pathos fitting the gravest human affairs, is worthy to rank by everlasting association with the solemn pages of the Hebrew prophets.

In discussing the character of men who have done their work so as to be the representatives of mighty events, we owe to them and to ourselves the exercise of the faculty of earnest and discerning discrimination. Indiscriminate eulogy is as undutiful as unsparing criticism, but if there is fault to find others may do it, for my share of it was done long ago.

We lose something of the value of the memory of Washington by that untutored idealization that exalts him into something almost superhuman, and to a place so cold and lofty that with our conscious deficiencies we can not clasp him with sympathetic confidence. If the time comes when Lincoln shall be "first in the hearts of his countrymen," it will not be because he was Commander-in-chief of hundreds of thousands of armed men, whereas Washington only led thousands, or because he was essentially a man of the people and a poor man, while Washington was an aristocrat and rich, but because through the photography of the press as well as of the camera of the period, we know Lincoln better far than Washington could be known, even to his contemporaries; and we love him because he was a man like ourselves. It is one of the privileges of the time in which we live to know men as they are. And love that is stronger than hate seeks knowledge, thrives upon it—and grows and blooms with what it feeds upon—and bears the fruit that is purple and golden.

Lincoln had what we might call "press facilities" superior to those enjoyed by Washington. He wrote a paragraph for a newspaper about himself, and Washington never did that. He was less sensitive about the newspapers than Washington, and the newspapers that assailed Lincoln were to those that abused Washington as hornets to gnats. Lincoln never got swearing mad about the papers that stung him, and Washington did, and he had a thousand provocations to Washington's one. He used the newspapers. When he wanted to proclaim that his object was to save the Union with or without slavery, he wrote to Horace Greeley. His most trusted adviser was an editor—Thurlow Weed—a maker of Presidents, wielding a power office could neither give nor take.

Ben Butler has been misreported, if he has not said several times that God, and not the newspapers, made him, but Butler, I fear, had a prejudice against the press, for he told me that, in his judgment, the war should not end without hanging at least a dozen editors, and there was an intimation that there was a chance to save the country by a striking ceremony of the sort then and there.

I think General Butler was in some degree mistaken in his estimate of the subordinate part of the newspapers in his makeup; but the remark he made of himself could with the completest justice be applied to Abraham Lincoln. The newspaper keeps the record of deeds that are great—and does well if it does fairly. The greatness it creates is for a day, while the goodness that it blights is a tender plant. It lends ten thousand torches to the fierce light that beats upon high place, but there is no light so burning that it is not wholesome to the greatness that is true, that does not give a finer temper to the iron manhood, that wears not out under the friction of hostile contact, but becomes polished steel, and is fashioned into a sword that shines forever.

Thirty-two years ago, when the Republican party was rallying for its first Presidential campaign, the signs of the times were not propitious. The Democratic party was immensely formidable. It was fortified in slavery, which was a huge despotism, holding unchallenged sway from Pennsylvania to Mexico, and seemed to be guaranteed endurance of power through the vehement prejudices of the people. The incessant reproach shouted and hissed at the Republicans was that their party was sectional. Slavery held a section. Liberty was not there, and so Liberty was sectional. As it was in the beginning, it is—but I trust we need

not add, it ever shall be. The campaign of 1856 was a gallant contest on the part of the Republicans. It was a young man's fight for the freedom of the territories; that slavery should not be nationalized; that the Government should not make more slave States. There was a purity and joy about the splendid struggle that the Republicans made with as fine an enthusiasm as ever glowed in an honorable cause, and that still is beautiful in the heavens where good fame is luminous like the stars.

In 1860, in April, the Democratic National Convention assembled to nominate a candidate for the Presidency and to declare the principles of the party, and the question could not be evaded, whether the employment of the Government should be the manufacture of slave States, and whether the Constitution, as a preliminary step, carried slavery into all the territories. On that the Democratic party split; and I heard the voice of Yancey ring in the streets of Charleston: "The historian may now nib his pen to write the story of a new revolution." Ah—it was a greater story, a grander and bloodier revolution, than Yancey dreamed of. He was no vulgar demagogue, but a man of principle and meant business; and he had about him something of that chivalry of which, notwithstanding the abuse of the word on both sides in the long and bitter war, there were actual examples, and many of them in the South, that had splendid soldiers but no statesmen. Slavery was a monstrous mother, and she then began to devour her own children.

When the Republican Convention assembled at Chicago, though the Democratic party had a tremendous prestige, there was much encouragement to believe that if a good selection of candidates was made, they

would be elected. The most marked Republican leader of the day was William H. Seward, who was called by his admirers "Old Irrepressible" because he had made the speech announcing the irrepressible conflict with slavery. Mr. Chase was the tallest of the strong men, but the Ohio delegation was fatally divided—an old and evil example. Chase once described Seward by likening him to a sword of such elastic metal that the blade could be bent until the point would touch the handle and spring back to its place with edge and point keen as ever.

Lincoln then was the Illinois lawyer who had won the honors in the series of debates of the Squatter Sovereignty question with its champion, Stephen A. Douglas, and whose speeches, together with those to which they were replies, had been published by Follett, Foster & Co., a firm in Columbus, Ohio. But while Lincoln acquired national fame in the Douglas debate, and with his lecture at Cooper Union, New York, the most memorable of his unofficial productions, he had a second time been disappointed in his ambition to be Senator of the United States, and he had been snubbed in the United States Court at Cincinnati by the arrogant Edwin M. Stanton, who afterward as the War Secretary held up the hands and more than the hands of President Lincoln in the dark hours when history was molded. But Stanton, though he wronged and ignored Lincoln at Cincinnati, by refusing to allow him to make a speech for which he was prepared, and stormed in Louisville because Grant attended the theater, gave essentials to both Lincoln and Grant. If there is any man who may be said to have stamped the rebellion under his feet—Stanton is the man. When the heroes and giants of good works are remembered, if he is ever

forgotten it will be through unpardonable ignorance.

That which was claimed for Lincoln as against Seward, when they were competitors before the Republican National Convention, was that he was conservative—that he was not an abolitionist, but a slavery restrictionist—that with him for a candidate the Republicans could carry Pennsylvania; and Governor Curtin and Judge Kelley are two living men who bore testimony to that effect. Thurlow Weed was at fault for once. He had neglected on his way to Chicago to call at Harrisburg and consult and conciliate Cameron, a man who still lives, and whom it is yet wise to consult and conciliate.

There have been many and unprofitable speculations as to the course of events if Seward had been, instead of Lincoln, the nominee and elected. But Seward could not have preserved the Union without fighting for it; and he could not have consented to surrender the Union to be broken by the secessionists. The sword might have been bent like a twig, but it would have flashed into a weapon again, like the incomparable blade of Damascus.

It was not in the nature of things under the circumstances of the war, that President Lincoln could escape the utmost violence of criticism and detraction; that in the midst of the stormy excitements of the times his conspicuous head should not be showered with a fiery hail of fierce objurgation, frenzied suggestion and wild admonitions. He was a quaint figure, too, and there were many shallow enough to belittle him because he was veritably one of the people—because he told stories, laughed and was dismal by turns, used homely familiar phrases, and got as mad as Andrew Jackson, though he scolded in a different way. He was like a

Shakspearean drama—the tragedy and the comedy—the mortal and the eternal—in the same leaves.

It was not all at once that the people recognized their leader—the clear brain, the strong hand, the tender heart, the singleness of purpose—the rare combination for our deliverance from tribulation. Not indeed until the hour of triumph—so swiftly followed by the hour of martyrdom—was it given to millions of his countrymen to see that his stature had become colossal and that his name was radiant with immortality—that he was like Goldsmith's tall cliff,

“That lifts its awful form,  
Swell from the vale, and midway leaves the storm,  
Though round its breast the rolling clouds are spread,  
Eternal sunshine settles on its head.”

Lincoln was not the man at the beginning that he was at the end of the race. His growth was constant up to his last days. Events educated him. He grew great with great occasions. His associations were gigantic, and he was not dwarfed by them as one who walks in the midst of Alpine or Andean mountains. He took upon himself the complexion, the atmosphere and the measurements of his stupendous surroundings. This language has exact application to General Grant.

The names of Lincoln and Grant are hewn together in the living rock of the record of the ages. They are the two stars of the first magnitude in the constellation of the illustrious names of their country and generation—and they were two plain boys, sons of plain people, with the blood and iron of our own folks here in the Ohio Valley—one born on the northern and the other on the southern side of the Ohio River—one of New England and the other of Virginian ancestry. Favored by no educated eminence, patrician grace, social distinction or adventitious fortune, they became the

representative men of the shrewd intelligence, the brave goodness, the enduring faith of the common people and of their common universal cause of Liberty and Union; and they rank as of the legitimate nobility of human nature, while their glory has become a priceless possession that shall strengthen the heart and the will, and lift up the face of the Nation against its enemies in all the days that are to come.



## SIT IN THE SADDLE AND RIDE

*By FRANK J. HUGHES*

Do you envy your fellow who's taking the pole?

Do you fail of his action and stride?

Don't bunch with the quitters who turn from the goal—

But sit in the saddle and ride.

Have they jockeyed you out of the last of the field?

Is the cup you have tried for denied?

Stay game to the end. There are chances concealed,

And the least you can do is to ride.

Is your hair growing gray and your face growing old?

Are your dreams their fruition denied?

To stay to the finish—who trades that for gold?

Sit close to the saddle and ride.

Is your course leading out to the shadowless land

Where the years of fulfilment abide?

Good luck to you, comrade! The grip of my hand.

Sit tight in the saddle and ride.

## KIT-KATICISMS

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JUST a few words about ourselves at the opening of this new volume, beginning the sixth year of Kit-Kat life. We are reveling in the luxury of a larger page and more beautiful typography and we invite our readers to share in our enjoyment of that which is and that which is to be in the other numbers of the year, for while the Kit-Kat lays the emphasis on spontaneity of expression, it nevertheless has a program of achievement.

In this number we are privileged to present, as the initial article, the scholarly address by Colonel George B. Harvey, editor of the *North American Review*, before the Kit-Kat Club of Columbus, Ohio, May 19 last. The occasion was the annual meeting of the Club, to which ladies as well as gentlemen are invited. The company that sat at dinner and afterwards listened to the address numbered two hundred and twenty-five, and, in personnel, was admittedly one of the choicest of the year. Requests for the publication of the address have been such that the Kit-Kat gladly improves the first opportunity to comply.



### HALSTEAD ON ABRAHAM LINCOLN

The article in this number by Murat Halstead is the address which he delivered before the Ohio League of Republican Clubs, at its banquet, February 12, 1888. For a number of years, the League met annually on Lincoln's birthday to celebrate the great achievements of the martyr president and to pledge the fealty of its

members to the Republican party. Mr. Halstead, the great editor of the *Cincinnati Commercial*, was the principal orator at the gathering in 1888, stirring the audience by his eloquence. When the room was filled with the applause at the conclusion of the speech, Daniel J. Ryan, the president of the League, asked Mr. Halstead for the manuscript, and it was given to him. For nearly twenty-nine years, that speech has been thus preserved and is now printed from the original copy. As a tribute to Lincoln, it is as good today as it was then. It also has interest as the maturer judgment of one of his severest war-time critics and as the literary production of a man who filled a large place in American journalism in the time of Greeley, Dana, Bennett, Richard Smith, Henry Watterson and others. Mr. Halstead was born in 1829, in Butler county, Ohio, and was writing for the newspapers before he was twenty. He died in 1908, after having done much in historical and biographical authorship, as well as in the ephemeral work of the newspapers.



#### LOOKING AHEAD

In the numbers of last year, the KIT-KAT offered a satisfying defense of Edgar Allan Poe from the aspersions of his first biographer, Griswold, as well as some side-lights on the poet's life and career and those of Lafcadio Hearn, Matthew Arnold, Maria del Occidente and others. A somewhat similar series of articles on American literary and other characters, together with some reflections historical, critical and biographical, will appear in the numbers of this year. A beginning



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